

worry about them." But this alleged distinction between quotas and other forms of numerical preferences is truly a semantic distinction without a difference. The label, after all, is not the offending practice. What is offensive is the practice of granting preferences on the basis of race and gender, and that practice is no less offensive when called by a name other than a quota.

I may be wrong about the President's intentions. I hope that I am wrong. This issue and the principle it touches on are much too important to surrender to lawyers and bureaucrats. If a society without discrimination is really our goal, then we need to engage in a national dialog about how best to get there. That means getting back to the original purpose of affirmative action by continuing our efforts to reach out to all segments of the community—to make everyone aware of opportunities. But it also means ceasing discrimination now. And that requires ending the Federal Government's massive system of race and gender preferences. President Clinton should embrace the principle of nondiscrimination and act to dismantle the system of preferences—a system which divides Americans and reinforces prejudice.

#### SAVE MEDICARE FROM BANKRUPTCY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. NORWOOD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning with the people back home in mind. For me, home is Augusta, GA, and the 10th District of Georgia. I must tell you how wonderful it was for me to be home this past weekend. Spending time with the hard-working people of the 10th district serves to strengthen my resolve, that what we are doing here in the next few months is what is right for America.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the people of America to consider the facts of our situation. We are 5 trillion dollars in debt. Fifteen cents of every dollar we spend goes to interest on the debt. The problem of the debt continues to grow out of control. Consider this: On February the 6th, I came to the floor in support of the line-item veto. In my remarks, I noted that the students in Sallie Bullock's calculus class at Madison County High in Danielsville, GA, already collectively owe \$310,760. I noted that Mary Mills' 5th grade class at Oconee County Intermediate School in Watkinsville, GA, already owes \$365,600. I noted that Martha Scroggs' kindergarten class at Episcopal Day School in Augusta already owes \$457,000. Since I gave that speech 5 short months ago, Sallie Bullock's students owe an additional \$7,600; Mary Mills' students owe an additional \$8,940; and Martha Scroggs' students owe an additional \$11,175.

Mr. Speaker, what did those children do to earn that additional debt? How

can we so thoughtless saddle children just out of kindergarten with more and more debt? It is immoral and we must bring that to an end by balancing our budget.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply a matter of fact that Medicare will go bankrupt in 7 years. It is a documented fact in a report put out by the Medicare trustees—three of whom are members of the Clinton administration. The solvency of Medicare is not a partisan issue. Medicare is going bankrupt. The Republicans have made a decision to fix Medicare. We will strengthen Medicare so that it may survive well into the next century. We must act to save the system now. Pretending that everything is all right is simply fantasizing.

Mr. Speaker, on this day many centuries ago, Emperor Nero Played his fiddle while the great city of Rome burned to the ground. It appears that all these centuries later, some of my colleagues on the other side have decided to take up Emperor Nero's mantle. Some of my colleagues want to play games. Last week the other side issued the proclamation that if the we, the Republicans, don't speed up the reconciliation process then they will slow the business of the House down. Yes, America—that's right. If we don't speed up; they will slow things down.

Mr. Speaker, let me be the first to say that I will stay here morning, noon, and night to balance our budget and to save Medicare from bankruptcy. I will stay here through the weekends to balance our budget and to save Medicare from bankruptcy. I will be here until the cows come home—if that's what it takes to balance our budget and to save Medicare from bankruptcy. The future of our Nation is at stake—and I would urge my colleagues to rise above the political games others may want to play. The business we are doing for America is too important to be sidetracked by those who would rather fiddle.

#### THE HISTORY OF MEDICARE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. DINGELL] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the history of Medicare and to discuss the importance of that program to the United States. I have heard a lot of people discuss how it is that Medicare is in trouble. Well, Medicare is one of the best working and most efficient programs in the history of this country. The cost of collecting money and disbursing it is less than 1½ percent.

The problem of Medicare is that costs of Medicare have, like all the costs of all other programs for paying for health, been stressed almost beyond belief by enormous increases which have occurred in health care costs across this country. The problem of Medicare is not one that it is not serving people. On the contrary, it has raised the num-

ber of Americans from something like 40 percent to better than 97 percent in the senior citizen category who have health insurance available to them now, something which was previously not available. Now, under Medicare, Americans can be assured that that health care system is going to meet their health care concerns.

Is Medicare going to go bankrupt? Yes, if something is not done. But not until 2002. Nothing need be done to cut the benefits, but rather to assure additional efficiencies. And what really needs to be addressed is to understand that getting control of the overall costs of health care is something which has to be done in order to protect not only Medicare, but Medicaid, Blue Cross, and all of the other health care programs, that are both public and private inside this country.

It is only fair to say that my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle are talking not about cutting Medicare to save the system, but, rather, they are talking about cutting Medicare in order to make possible a tax cut.

Medicare benefits are going to be cut, according to the Republican budget, about \$270 billion. However, a health care cut of this magnitude is going to be matched by a tax cut which will go mostly to the richest 10 percent of the people in this country, and will cost the government about \$240 billion.

A wiser approach would be to address the underlying problems of our health care system. A wiser approach would be to see to it that we address the concerns of all in preserving Medicare, but to do so not to provide a tax cut to the wealthy, but rather to address the significant problems which exist in all health care costs and in payments for all health care costs.

You know, it is a matter of history that the Republicans voted overwhelmingly against Medicare, and they opposed it time after time whenever the issue was before this body or was before the House or before the Senate. They opposed it in committee as well as on the floor of the two bodies.

Medicare is something which was enacted because the Democrats forced it through. It is something which will be protected and preserved because the Democrats prevented the Republicans from eviscerating that program or from converting it into a private program. There are significant attempts going on now to privatize Medicare.

One of the remarkable things which occurred in the early discussion was the comments of Republican Members who criticized Medicare, pointing out that it was socialized medicine, claiming that it was going to threaten independence and individual liberties of Americans who would derive benefits under that particular program.

Well, history has shown that Medicare has been one of the great blessings, not only to this country, but to senior citizens, not only to senior citizens, but to the younger Americans